

of their own; Cuba is a country of large families, and it became a question of starving their own children or of letting the young reconcentrados look out for themselves.

Only for the Cuban rations distributed by our army it would be a sorry lookout for these helpless little ones. They range in number from thirty to seventy five and even 100, in the various towns; utterly homeless, and no one has the least personal interest in them or responsibility for them. All are kind to them, for the Cubans are a kind people. The townspeople still do what they can, but their main dependence is, however, begging of the passengers of every passing train. It sometimes becomes difficult to alight for the crowd of little eager faces and outstretched hands; and yet they are among the brightest, most grateful and lovable children I have ever seen, when cared for and made comfortable.

Their very rags are filled with disease germs, filthy beyond description. Starvation has distended their stomachs, emaciated their limbs, the feet are swollen and often broken open, heads crusted with vermin, and all have the itch.

It was a subject for both humane and medical study, and together our surgeons and trained nurses thought out and wrought out a system which, we believe, simply followed out as now being pursued, will in less than six months transform these thousands of hapless renegades into clean, wholesome, well-ordered children; learning to work, to read, and to forget the dreadful lives of pain, want and woe they went thru.

The system is this: Finding it impossible to take the time to attempt to follow the customary methods of making up large asylums in the great cities, as the conditions of these children meant life and death to themselves and to others, it was decided to gather them up just where they were—making smaller asylums of the plainest and simplest kind, interesting the authorities and the people of the city at all times in the movement, securing their full co-operation, providing for all wants, and making it possible for the people of the towns to look after them as their own, with our continued care and oversight.

As our system is the same for all asylums, a description of one will probably be an index to the hundred to follow, if we shall be so fortunate as to make them. I will select one of the earlier towns in Havana province, the domain of General Lee, as being perhaps one of the least inviting, for as our work becomes known, we are sought on every hand. The poor conditions of this town had been pointed out, and the description decided Dr. Hubbell to attempt assistance. A notice was sent that the Red Cross would visit them on a certain day. To the astonishment of the doctor and his little party, they were met a half-mile out of the town by the mayor and other municipal authorities with a crowd of people, and this explanation was given. "Our town is a wreck. During the war it was five times forcibly entered by the contending armies. First one and then the

other; in all the three years no one has ever come to us but to do us harm! but when we learned that the Red Cross was coming we knew that was for good and we are here to meet and welcome you."

The doctor asked the number of full reconcentrado orphans in the town—"about 60." "What they were able to do for them?" "Little or nothing. They get some rations, but no care." "Would you like to have them cared for?" "Of all things they are a sore grief to us." Have you an empty house large enough to accommodate them?" "Yes, but in poor condition, it has been used for Spanish quarter for troops and is broken and dirty." "Can I see it?" "Certainly." It was on the outskirts of the town. "Has it some land near it for gardens?" "Yes."

The great empty house was visited in the midst of a grove of cocoanuts and bananas and accepted. A few working men, water, lime, brooms, whitewash and brushes and other utensils sent for and all set to work to make that dingy shelter a clean, white, comfortable home for the remnants left. A telegram went to the warehouse in Havana for sixty cots, blankets, pillows, sheets, a like number of tin or enameled plates, with knives, forks, spoons, cups, cooking utensils, small bathtubs, soap, towels, sulphur, pieces of calico, unbleached cotton, denims, thread, needles, shoes, salt meat, lard, Indian meal, rice, beans, peas, coffee, sugar, condensed milk, soup, etc., enough to provide sixty children two or three weeks. The second day completed the cleaning of the house, and made a row of long rough board tables and benches to stand beside them and some other rough board furniture. The kitchen was found with its little charcoal firepots, the water also found and tested. All the town was beginning to look curiously at the work. Meanwhile the once-a-day train from Havana arrives, and with it the car of supplies, which are quickly transferred to the building and as quickly put in a place for use. The little bathing-tubs are here, the soap, sulphur and salve. Does any one think these children had to be hunted and gathered in? By no means, no one in all the town watched those movements as closely as they. Instinct sharpened by necessity and experience had taught them wisdom. They felt that all this meant something for them, and one invitation was sufficient. The hair was clipped, the infected rags removed, and all daintily put in a pile to be burned—the little visitor put into a soap and sulphur bath, scrubbed and treated.

Meanwhile the cots had been set up in long lines, white, clean and inviting. Long before this day was over the good women of the town had learned that clothes were to be made. No fingers are more deft than the Cuban women's, and no mothers that I have ever seen are so motherly and tender as the Cuban mothers. All the better families have sewing machines. At eight o'clock that third morning twelve ladies of the town with their machines and as many more with their scissors

and needles to cut, baste and finish, were at the house: and before night there was no child without a new, clean, prettily made dress or suit; no vermin, no contagion unprovided for.

The little charcoal fires are started, and the soup, vegetables, etc., put in course of preparation. The long tables are set and the family of sixty little boarders sit down to it. For the first time almost in their remembrance or perhaps their lives, they sat at a table, and ate with knife, fork and spoon—with childish awkwardness to be sure—but they ate, and ate it all—one would not dare to give them more.

The nurses and the ladies taught them to help clear away their dishes and to wash them, and when that was over they came back to the long table and benches, now become a school-room—the little primer with large letters, the delight of a child, and one looked through the tears to see them pointing with their little skeleton fingers to tell the one sitting nearest by that that is "O," and this is "S"—poor little God forsaken creatures. Where were you three days ago?

At length it was decided that I visit an asylum only a few days old. We reached it by train, and I was told that the children were waiting to receive me. I went at once. Here were two long lines, comprising some 100 boys and girls, the lines commencing near the great open door. As I entered, the first little girl modestly lifted her hand, and as I took it she bravely broke the silence with the sweetest little accent, "Good-morning." The next did the same, and the next, and so on to the end of the line, which I was able to finish; but when I turned to the first wee little boy and he glanced up with his great dark Cuban eyes, and lisped in his pretty little accent, "Dood-morning," it was too much. I went thru the line, but did not see. I need not add that the nurses enjoyed the success of their little scheme of teaching English.

Every asylum has its land; sometimes one or two acres, sometimes ten or fifteen. The farmers frequently volunteer to plow up enough for a garden to commence with; hoes, shovels and seed are given the asylum, and the larger children, boys and girls, are shown how to use them.

There are usually one or more widowed mothers with some children of their own whom the town recommends as derirable persons to live in the asylum with the children—their care over them is invaluable, their instruction and help equally so. It is interesting to see the smaller children dropping the corn into the drill, and again their delight when it reappears. Dr. Carbonell told us that at his last visit of inspection he saw in several of the gardens the children playfully trying on tiptoe to look over the tops of the corn they had planted themselves only a few weeks before, that they were eating lettuce and radishes of their own, and that in six weeks they would be eating their own sweet potatoes. With the three or four crops a year of Cuba, these children, small